# Sing out!

PEOPLE'S ARTISTS PUBLICATION

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MARCH, 1951

25¢



# **Peoples Artists Makes Record**

Hootenanny Records' new release of "Song of My Hands" and "Spring Song," is a record anyone should be proud to have. But beyond that, it means a great deal to me because here for the first time we have The Song of My Hands on a record.

I think it was two years ago that I first heard this song, and at that time Ernie Lieberman sang it. Without any question he will become associated with the song. And that immortality, which it is bound to gain as one of the great songs of the American working class will be in part due to his efforts.

That it is a great song and destined to be sung by millions, I have no doubt. There is no way in which one can define or analyze good quality. You hear a song and you know that it has it. That is how I felt about The Song of My Hands. It brought me back to that time so many years ago when I first heard Joe Hill—and I think that here we have a song which will do something of what Joe Hill did.

Of course it will take time; but that is only to be expected. I don't have too much faith in the kind of a song that



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#### BY HOWARD FAST

bubbles up to the top of the thermometer a week after it has been published, The Song of My Hands is just not that kind of a song. It will find its way home more slowly but ever so much more surely, and I am quite certain that some day in the future this original recording by Peoples Artists will become a museum item of great value and great historic interest.

Above all, the song must be sung and sung again. I wonder why I hear so few people's artists sing it. Perhaps now that the recording exists, that will be changed and more and more will sing this very fine and moving song.

Just a word about Spring Song, which need not take second place to anything. Here too is an exceedingly important and moving song which can be of great value to us today. It is perhaps not the peace song—there will be many, many peace songs before we get to that point. But it is nevertheless a song of good quality and great political importance, and I am glad that it was put on the other side of the record.

#### ABOUT THE COVER

The vigil in Washington for the Martinsville Seven was carried on 24 hours a day from Tuesday, January 31, to Monday, February 5, 1951, In the freezing cold, despite snow and rain, the pickets walked in silence, not allowed to voice their feelings in songthe President could not be disturbed ... Seven innocent Negro men have been legally lynched, but like their slain brothers, their voices have not been stilled. The fight for full freedom for the Negro people goes on. In the fighting, courageous spirit of the Negro people--expressed in their sacrifices, their struggles, their culture -- we rededicate SING OUT to the building of a really free America and a world at peace.

> Ernie Lieberman For the Staff

# 69 SUGAR IS SO SWEET

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Negro Creole Folksong

From the bayous of Louisiana have come many songs of the French-speaking Creoles. This is the first of many that we are going to run in future issues. It's fun to sing so just enjoy it and anyone who's listening will too.



Tan' si-ro e dou', Madeleine, Tan' si-ro e dou'. (REPEAT) Ne crie pa' si fort, Madeleine (REPEAT) La maison n'e pas a nou', Madeleine, La maison n'e pas a nou',

Sirup is so sweet, Madeleine, Sirup is so sweet. (REPEAT) Oh, don't sing out so loud, Madeleine (REPEAT) For this house is not our own, Madeleine, For this house is not our own.

# Folksongs; How Long?

- by Woody Guthrie-

It was a pair of mighty perty girls that come through this big wind to my house from your Abraham Lincoln Ballad English class to interview me about my life as a ballad and folksong man.

The Archives of American Folksongs in the Library of Congress, in Washington, D. C., calls me: "Our best contemporary ballad writer." (That word, contemporary, that means, well, it means, I'm still alive. It means, too, that the Library of Congress, I suppose, is surprised to see me that way.)



Folksongs and ballads are a big subject; just as old and just as young, just as big to talk about as this whole humanly race around our planet here.

Both of your ballad-class girls asked me, who is doing the most to keep folksong alive? How long will ballad songs last? That is, will folksongs ever die and be gone?

I claim that everybody born to dwell on this earth does almost an equal share to keep our songs, poems, ballads, and such things alive. It is all of these things that keep each and every one of us alive. It's just an even trade.

If by some freak of fate and providence a movie camera followed you every minute and hour for the rest of your life, all the rest of us would think of you as a great actor.

If by the same slip of fate a microphone followed you all around your daily and nightly works and labors, if it could pick up your thoughts, words, ideas, opinions, notions, dreams, plans, and ups and downs, your laffs and your tears; then, all the rest of us would think of you as our greatest living folksinger.

You would hum about this plan, you would mumble some melody under your breath, you would sing about it; you would see a freak storm piling things about and you would sing (to your own self) about that; you would see picnics, parties, good times, celebrations, prankings, funny games, clowning, and other ticklish scenes before your eye and you would hum and sing and make songs (to yourself) about that. You would lay down on your pillow at night and hum an odd concoction of ten dozen songs to play for your ticket to the place called sleep.

And, if you took time out, we'll say, to take your penny pencil (or speed ball pen) in your hand; and, if you tried to make your true feelings rhyme on paper like they so freely do on your lip and tongue; and, if you tried to tell about the actual things you saw happen in any one day, and one night, or any one year or any ten years, then you would send your writings in to the publishers and all the rest of us would call you a poet, a songwriter, a ballad writer.

But, well, you see how this could keep going on and on for ten thousand pages; because when you try to talk about folksongs and ballads you are talking about something which has been here since the first little newly-born baby got slapped on his hip to make him-her yell; and, it will keep right on going and growing just as long as the whole race of us can duck and dodge that atom bomb blast.

# 70 WHEN JESUS WEPT

Words and music b" William Billings

A song for the Lenten season. It may be sung as a round without accompaniment, a new voice entering on each line. If done by a choral group, the conductor is free to have some of the scpranos sing with the tenors and vica-versa, a combination which Billings described as "a conjunction beyond expression sweet and ravishing."



# about William Billings ....

Born in Boston in 1746, William Billings captured the spirit of the revolutionary times in which he lived in his music. A tanner, self-taught in music, he scribbled tunes on hides with chalk. His appearance was as unusual as his personality. He was one-eyed, with a game leg and arms of unequal length -- and he could shatter the stillness of a Boston Sabbath with his bellowing voice.

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He broke sharply with traditional psalm singing by introducing more lively melodies and his "fuguing tunes" -- so called because voices enter one after another in contrapuntal imitation. He declared these "fuguing tunes" were "more than twenty times as beautiful as the old slow tunes", and they were sung by church choirs and revolutionary soldiers with great enthusiasm. Those who heard and sang them were "delighted, their minds surprisingly agitated...sometimes declaring for one part and sometimes for another.... Oh ecstatic! Rush on, you sons of Harmony!"

# FORMING A CHORUS

This is the sixth in a series of articles by Ralph Ditchik, conductor and composer. He is now teaching a class and workshop in choral conducting at the Metropolitan Music School, 18 West 74th St., in New York. The School especially encourages trade union, community, and youth organizations to send people to this class in order to develop their own musical leadership.

#### HOW TO SING

#### (D) "ALIVENESS"

One of the most important qualities which a chorus must develop is the quality of "aliveness".

The question of "aliveness" is the question of breathing a living and vital quality into and through the performance of a musical piece. Not a pale reflection of the composer's intentions! Not a kind of mirror-image or a "telling about"! How meaningless are the timid or "crooning" sounds which form the entire musical gamus of so many singing groups! . . Whisperings of the outer surfaces of life. . . Reality stripped of the gust, the humanity, the real qualities expressed, leaving only the sentimental memories.

Sing with the breath of life! For singing is a real part of life and merely not a memory of it!

Such is the nature of the problem of "aliveness" in singing.

#### HOW DOES CHORAL MUSIC COME TO LIFE?

#### 1. Social vitality

a. Choral singing is a cooperative activity that assumes magnificence when each singer feels and understands the role that he or she is playing. It is this experience of each individual in making his or her melodic contribution to produce a greater, richer whole, that creates the joy of choral singing. Without this joy, there is no "aliveness". . .there is no music.

b. The cooperative energies of the members of the chorus must have a real source of inspiration. This source of inspiration rests partly in the confidence in and respect and love for human beings in general, and for each other in particular. For the ability to express real togetherness, human warmth, etc., through music, or any other media, depends upon the extent that one experiences these qualities in daily life. And this in turn depends upon the role of the individual and of the chorus in the life of the community.

c. Performances, so that the chorus can communicate its songs to others, are absolutely essential. Simply to sing in each other's ears week after week is the best way for chorus to develop not only a deterioration in the quality and "aliveness" of the singing, but in its own membership as well.

#### 2. Choice of music

a. Choose good music! No one can get excited about something when there is really nothing to get excited about. Even worse is the danger of developing "musical perversion", through constant attempts to evoke real feelings from a musical void. (Has not the mass consumption of "commercial" music in our councill (continued on p. 16)

# 71 CONNOLLY'S REBEL SONG

This march was dedicated to James Connolly, perhaps the most famous of all Irish Revolutionary heroes. Sing it with strength and vision.



We sing no more of wailing, No more of sighs or tears, But stout our hearts And strong our hands, and banished all our fears. Our flag is raised above us That all the world may see, This Labor's hope And Labor's strength Alone can Labor free,

# 72 JOHN D ROCKEFELLER

If you're worried about how to get rid of your excess money this song can be of great help. Sing it lightly and satirically but with a solid rhythm, Copyright 1550 Folkways Music Publishing Inc. All Rights Reserved including public performance for profit.



The Bible said, Take all
You own and give it away;
And that's the reason that John D.
Rockefeller
Is so poor today. (CHORUS)

He gave Standard Oil to the people, And the Chase National Bank, Gave Radio City and Rockefeller Plaza

And never asked for thanks. (CHORUS)

John D. Rockefeller got religion,
Went to church a couple of times,
The preacher asked him to pass
the plate
And he never stole a dime. (CHORUS)

Now you may think I'm lying
And I most probably am,
For if John D. Rockefeller ever
got religion,
I'm the King of Siam. (CHORUS)

# 73 ATOM BOMB BLUES

Words and music by Lawrence Gellert



Slowly and Rhythmically



Woke up this mor - nin'

At-om Bomb Blues a-round my



head, Woke up this mor - nin' At - om Bomb Blues a-round my head,



Don't mind the weather If the wind don't blow,

If the wind don't blow, Wouldn't mind MacArthur Safe back in Baltimore.

Well, no use a-moanin', Ain't no call to cry, If you want to go on livin' Long time before you die.

Write to the President Here is what we say, Atom Bomb Blues ain't nothin' Like Missouri Waltz you play. One li'l atom bomb And BOOM everythin' gone, Worse'n what that hurricane Struck down my old home town,

Somethin' Mr. President That you forget to know, You got to reap Exactly how you sow.

Woke up this mornin'
Atom Bomb Blues around my head,
Still time for that Peace Bird
To come a-circlin' instead.

# FORMING A CHORUS?

Readers are invited to send in comments on Ralph Ditchik's series of articles, "Forming A Chorus", as well as on this first analysis of Ditchik's approach.

A few comments on Ralph Ditchik's series of articles, "Forming A Chorus", currently appearing in SING OUT.

History poses two kinds of music: music of the people in its national and individual expression; and music of the people's rulers, who codify, classify, and dominate the prevailing "musical culture".

It is because this fundamental point is not made clear that Ditchik neglects the background of the particular group of singers who know what to sing and how, but are constantly being isolated from singing it because of the compromising effects of commercialism, political oppression, and the highly developed skills required to manipulate the modern symphony orchestra and the equally unsingable

ductor does one thing -- he works to determine the total impression of a performance.

What are the REAL problems of a chorus -- and I mean a trade union or community people's chorus? Here you will find the problems are time and place of rehearsal, carfare, and baby-sitters. And after you have solved many of the women's and mothers' problems, you begin to wonder where the rest of the good tenors and basses are hiding.

On repertoire, you start on what the members know. You correct, adjust, make them aware of all changes, the way their voices lead. Then you begin to discuss attack, intonation in terms of the problems they create. Repertoire is in the air they breathe. You introduce the People's Songbook, SING OUT, spirituals, and let them add what they like.

# -- A REPLY TO RALPH DITCHIK

By James Hutchinson -- Music Editor, SING OUT Conductor, Bedford-Stuyvesant Peace Chorus

cantata. In a word, the impoverishment of the people culturally is forgotten.

The dictatorial role of the conductor as it emerges in the articles is the result of an abstract ideological view as opposed to a functional use of music. This view says that the singers are not singing of their experiences, therefore the only one who "knows" what to do and how to do it is the conductor. This conductor has achieved the intellectual and social distinction, with its economic status, of being called "conductor".

Now, if he is the only one who "knows", why should his singers be for peace? Why should they want something particular to sing about if they don't know they want it? Anyone who has ever conducted a Negro Church choir knows that a good con-

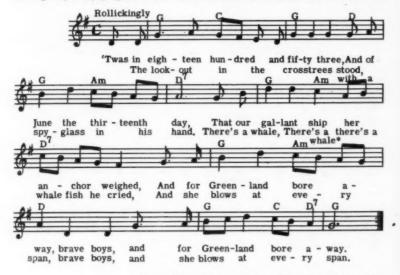
Your problems begin after the chorus has developed to the performance level. How do you get workers, many of them mothers and housewives, to two regular performances plus a rehearsal a week. On this point depends your Peace struggle and the peace of the chorus. Here is a problem, the solution of which is not found in a single textbook or musical institution. Why? Because peace, jobs, security is assumed to exist for all in their conception of society. That's why they train "conductors".

Lest readers of SING OUT get the idea that this is all negative, let me say that the raising of the problems in itself is a step forward. Now possibly, we can begin to open up the much-needed discussion on choral work for the general profit of the

people's movement.

# 74 GREENLAND FISHERIES

"Reuben Ranzo was no sailor, so he shipped aboard a whaler", says a well known shanty. Regular seamen wouldn't ship on whalers, because conditions were so bad. Crews were impressed from waterfront malcontents, who hated everything and everybody. This hearty shanty should be sung with a strong rolling rhythm paying careful attention to the ups and downs of the story.



\* Sing "There's a" under the 'D' as two eighth notes

The captain stood on the quarter-deck, And a fine little man was he, "Overhaul! Overhaul! Let your davit-tackles fall, And launch your boats for sea,

Now the boats were launched and the men aboard, And the whale was in full view; Resolv-ed was each seaman bold To steer where the whalefish blew,

We struck that whale, the line paid out, But she gave a flourish with her tail; The boat capsized and four men were drowned, And we never caught that whale, "To lose the whale,"
our captain said,
"It grieves my heart full sore;
But oh! to lose four gallant men,
It grieves me ten times more.

"The winter star doth now appear, So, boys, we'll anchor weigh; It's time to leave this cold country, And homeward bear away.

Oh, Greenland is a dreadful place, A land that's never green, Where there's ice and snow, and the whalefishes blow, And the daylight's seldom seen.

Repeat "brave boys" and the last line of each verse as indicated in the music.

#### 75 THE DRAFTEE'S LAMENT

Words and music by Harold Colter

Feeling the need for this song the author - a young man - just up and wrote it. (See Correspondence). It's a good catchy tune, easy to teach, so sing it light and easy and have everyone join in.



#### DRAFTEE'S LAMENT

Additional verses:

I love a pretty girl, dressed all in blue,

She's the one, the only one, that I love true.

I'd love her in the morning, and I'd love her late at night,

I don't want to love her memory through a steel gun sight.



I love a pretty girl, dressed all in green,

She's the one, the only one, who'll ever be my queen.

And to be near her, I would go to the top of the moon and back,

I don't want to love her letters in a bombed-out shack.



I love a pretty girl, dressed all in pink,

She's the one, the only one, to whom I'll raise my glass and drink.

And even if I don't come back, my heart will never fail,

'Cause I'll send her love and kisses by the Devil's air mail.





Merle Travis, noted for his Capitol album "Songs From the Hills," sings on a specially-prepared series of transcriptions to be used to educate the public on VD. The series was prepared through a committee at Columbia University under the supervision of Alan Lomax.

The Workers Music Association of England has come up with a new set of lyrics for Bob Claiborne's "R's My Union." The new number is called "It's My Paper" and is about the London Daily Worker.

The Music Division of the National Council of Arts, Sciences and Professions in New York is planning a series of concerts in conjunction with District 65 of the Distributive, Processing, and Office Workers of America.

Interested in swapping old discs, tapes, wire recordings? A New York member of People's Artists has been conducting some extensive trades throughout the world. Write to People's Artists and we will forward your com-

munication.
Jansen Pianos getting all excited about their new invention--ORGANO. You just attach it to your piano and you can make like an organ. Now all you need is a piano.

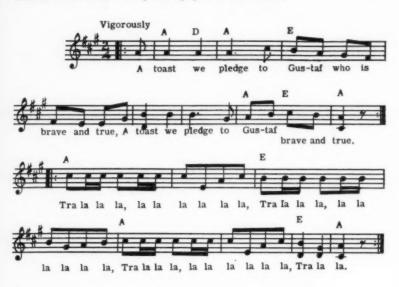
Betty Sanders home from Europe as we go to press. Watch next issue of SINGOUT for extended report on music in Poland, Betty spent some two months in and around Warsaw.

Shoshanah Damari, singing star of Israel, whose specialty is Yemenite folksongs, is currently making the owners of New York's Cafe Habibi very happy. Audience response so far has been terrific.



# 76 GUSTAF'S SKOAL

This is a Swedish dance toasting King Gustaf of Sweden. If you with you can substitute the name of any worthy person for Gustaf.



Formation: A square set of 8, partners join inside hands.

Explanation: Players all sing.

Head couples advance toward each other with 3 walking steps,
 bow or curtsey, walk 4 steps back to place. Measures 1 - 4.

2. Side oouples do the same. Measures 5 - 8. Repeat 1 and 2. 3. Side couples hold inside hands high to form an arch. Head couples with 4 skips move toward center. Drop partner's hand and join inside hand with opposite, skip 4 steps under nearest arch. Release hand of opposite, separate, and continue to original place with 4 skips. Measures 9 - 13.

4. All couples join both hands and swing with 4 skips. Measures 14-16. Repeat 3 and 4, head couples forming arch.

Ladies advance toward center with 2 walking steps. Courtesy.
 Return to place with 2 steps backward (coyly). Measures 1 - 4.

6. Gents do the same (with bravado). Measures 5 - 8.

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7. Everyone joins hands and advances toward the center with 4 running steps, 4 steps back to place. Repeat. Measures 1 - 8.

8. Circle left with a step together step (two step) 6 times, stamp 3 times, repeat to the right. Measures 9 - 16.

# Correspondence -

Gentlemen:

Would it be possible for me to get the rest of the words to this song? (which is obviously a parody; the tune being a "Salvation Army" type tune in 3/4 time).

"When I was a little lad
Upon my mother's knee,
This is what she always had
As her fond advice to me-CHORUS:

"Always follow the golden rule: Use every trick and wile; Do the next fellow before he does you,

And never forget to smile."

If I remember correctly, there are two more verses to this thing.

Anybody there remember it? I certainly would appreciate the information. I heard it about ten years ago just once.

Very expectantly, M. Greenhill

P. S.: Just for a laugh--

I sent the above request to the "Queries" Editor of the New York Times Book Review and the reply was a suggestion that I write to the Children's Division of the New York Public Library!

#### SING OUT ON DISC

This month we are trying something new for those of our readers who can't read music, or don't like to bother, or can't tell from the music what a song should sound like. We are arranging to have a verse and chorus of each song in SINGOUT put on a single disc to be made available to subscribers of SING OUT. This service will cost \$1.50 to cover the cost of the disc and mailing. Write to SING OUT, 106 E. 14th St., N.Y.C.

Dear Peoples Artists:

Enclosed you should find a song that I wrote called the "Draftee's Lament". If the melody sounds a little like The Man Who Watered the Worker's Beer or if the words have overtones of Jennie Jenkins among others, I hope you'll ignore it. The reason I send it on to you is that I feel a song of this general content ought to be around today. So, if you like it, please feel free to use it. If you think that only parts of it are passable, then don't hesitate to do an overhauling job. And if the whole thing is no damn good, then I hope, at least, that some Artist of the People will catch the idea and produce something better.

> Sincerely, Hal Colter

#### SPECIAL!



Through the cooperation of the Union Square Music Shop subscribers to SING OUT can now get an album of Richard Dyer Bennett at reduced cost. This album of 12" records has the famous singer-guitarist doing "Barbara Allen", "John Henry", "I Once Loved A Girl", "Gently Johnny My Jingolo", and "The Three Ravens". It retails at \$5.00 but if you are a subscriber you can get it for \$3.00 (includes postage and handling) by enclosing \$3.00 in an envelope and writing to Peoples Artists, 106 E. 14th St., N.Y.C. This is the first of monthly offers to our readers. So tell your friends about it. They can save money by subscribing to SING OUT.

#### FORMING A CHORUS (continued from p. 6)

try born the bitter fruits of musical miseducation?)

b. The content of the music and the text must express feelings which have a relation to the lives and experiences of the members of the chorus and audience, or else "aliveness" can be, at best, an artificial injection, which will ring false every time.

#### 3. Content of music

A piece of music assumes vitality only if the content is understood. This means:

a. Establish, as far as possible, the historical context of the music. i. e. when was the piece written; for whom; how did the people live at the time; how did the composer live; what was his relation to his audience; how was the music performed; for whom; what was the "musical language" of the time; was there more than one; what was the social context that produced the musical style and language; how was it paralled in other arts of this period, etc. . .

b. Establish the content of the text, i. e. where did the text come from; who

wrote it; what does it mean. . .

c. Establish the specific musical content of the piece under study. i. e. the overall structure, feeling, the phrases, their shapes, and qualities, the points of relaxation and tension, of climax and release, the harmony, the form, the interweavings of the counterpoints,... all of those things we talked about in relation to the problem of unfolding the content of a piece of music. (Sing Out-Jan. 51)

#### 4. Rehearsals

a. The conductor must make the music and the text come to life--even at moments of drill on one part or another. Always the conductor has as his or her major task the problem of making the music as real, as concrete, as clear, and as meaningful as possible.

b. It is desirable that part of the beginning of each rehearsal be spent in a "warming up" period, which should serve the function of warming up the chorus to sing in tune, with rhythmic clarity, and ensemble, and with an "aliveness" of

tone.

These are the basic prerequisites for developing "aliveness" in choral singing.



